

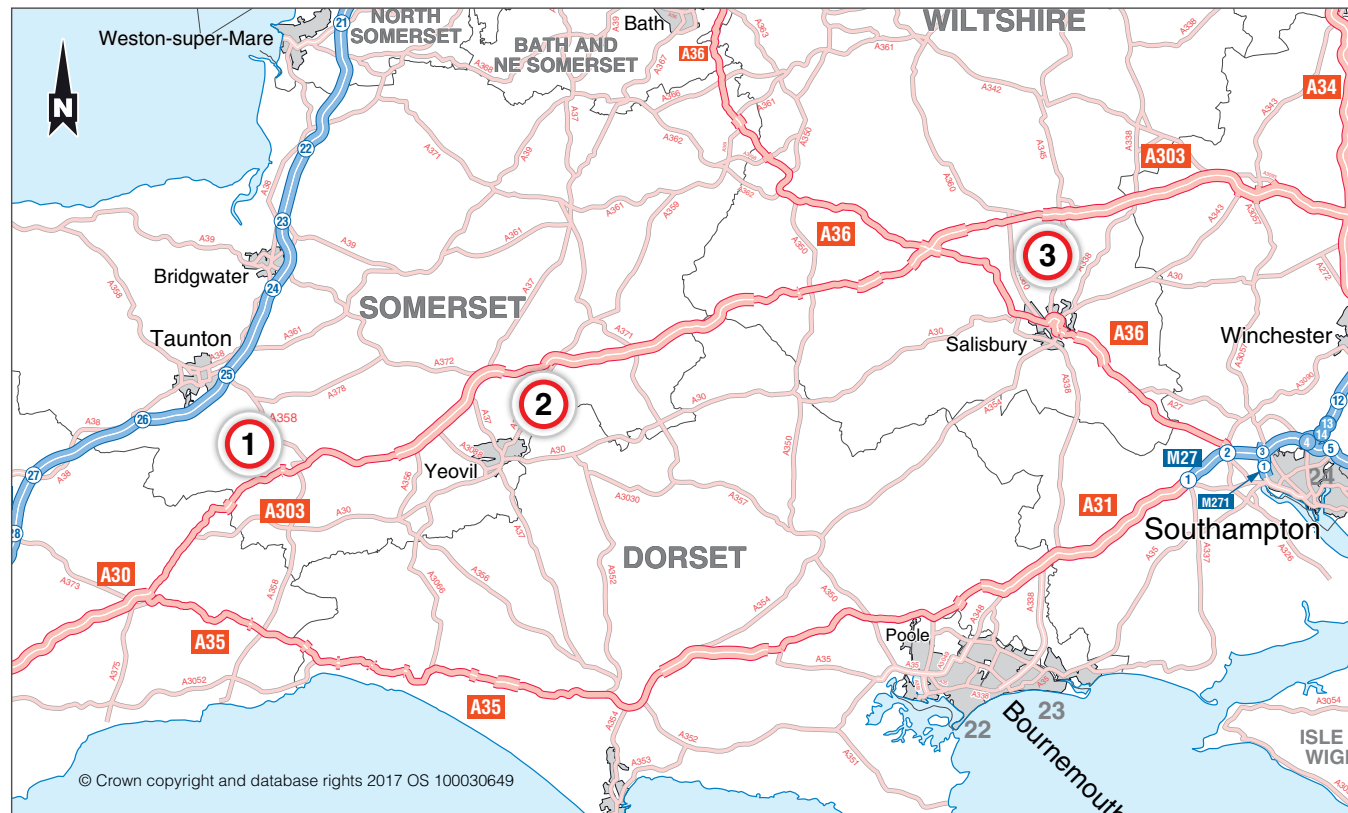
A303

Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling Scheme
Public consultation



Introduction

Highways England is consulting on proposals to upgrade the A303 between Sparkford and Ilchester to dual carriageway



A303/A358 route corridor schemes

This improvement is needed to relieve congestion and improve the safety performance of one of the busiest stretches of the A303/A358 route corridor that connects the south west to London and the south east.

There are important choices to be made and your views on our proposals will inform the decision on which route to take forward for detailed design.

Please take the time to read this brochure, attend a public consultation event and provide us with your comments by returning a completed questionnaire.

Background

The Government announced its Road Investment Strategy (RIS) for the period between 2015/16 and 2019/20 in December 2014. The strategy includes the Government's intention to upgrade all remaining single carriageway sections of the A303 between the M3 and the A358 to dual carriageway standard, together with creating a dual carriageway link from the M5 near Taunton to the A303, as part of a long-term commitment to creating a new expressway to the south west. To support this ambition, we are developing three major road improvement schemes along the A303/A358 route corridor:

- 1. A358 Taunton to Southfields
- 2. A303 Sparkford to Ilchester
- 3. A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down

The A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling scheme

The A303/A358 route is a vital link between the south west, London and the south east, connecting people, communities, and business. As well as carrying lots of long distance east-west commuters, the A303 is also the main road for key towns like Ilchester and Yeovil as well as many smaller communities along the way.

The section of the A303 between Sparkford and Ilchester comprises a mix of dual and single lane

carriageway, which leads to localised congestion, impacting adversely on journey times and journey time reliability.

On a normal day up to 26,000 vehicles use this single carriageway section, which is twice as much as it was designed for. At weekends in the summer the number of vehicles using this section of road can increase by nearly half as many again.

Due to the increase in traffic, average travel times can double on the eastbound direction on a Friday

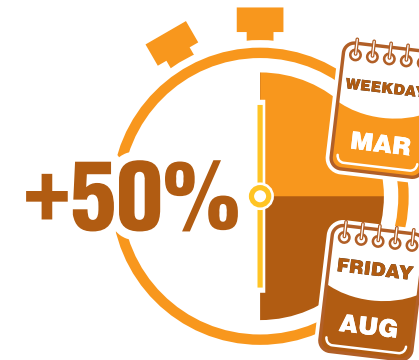


in August, making it impossible to predict the time a journey will take.

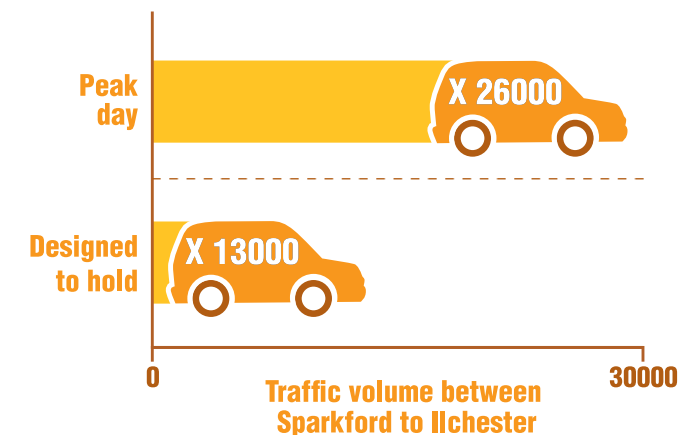
This traffic is forecast to increase as local authorities along the length of the corridor seek to deliver economic growth and new development.

We are proposing to dual the 3 mile section of single carriageway between Sparkford and

Average journey times



Average daily traffic



Ilchester, with a view to creating nearly 30 miles of dual carriageway on the A303 between South Petherton and Mere.

Why do we need the scheme?

While there are sections of dual carriageway on the A303 between Sparkford and Ilchester, the majority is still single carriageway. This presents the following issues:

- poor junction visibility
- slow moving agricultural vehicles
- limited opportunities for overtaking
- increasing traffic levels outgrowing the capacity of the existing road design

The consequences of these issues are:

- congestion and longer journey times during peak times and the summer months
- unreliable journey times
- queueing at the junctions due to the interaction between local and strategic traffic
- increased risk of incidents causing delays and knock on effects to surrounding local routes





Benefits of the scheme

The proposed scheme provides a number of benefits to road users, businesses, the local community and tourists, they include:

- relieving traffic congestion on a vital link to the south west peninsula
- providing more reliable journey times
- improving safety and reducing driver stress by providing a more free-flowing network
- providing safer local access provisions for pedestrians, cyclists and other non-motorised users
- supporting the local economy to grow through the creation of a modernised and reliable road that reduces delays and makes the south west more accessible for tourism and business
- improving the environment by reducing pollution from queuing traffic, particularly during the busy summer months

Developing the scheme

An improvement to this section of road had been considered previously during the 1990s, reaching Public Inquiry in 1994. In October 2003, following additional development of the scheme, a public exhibition was held but further work was stopped in 2005.

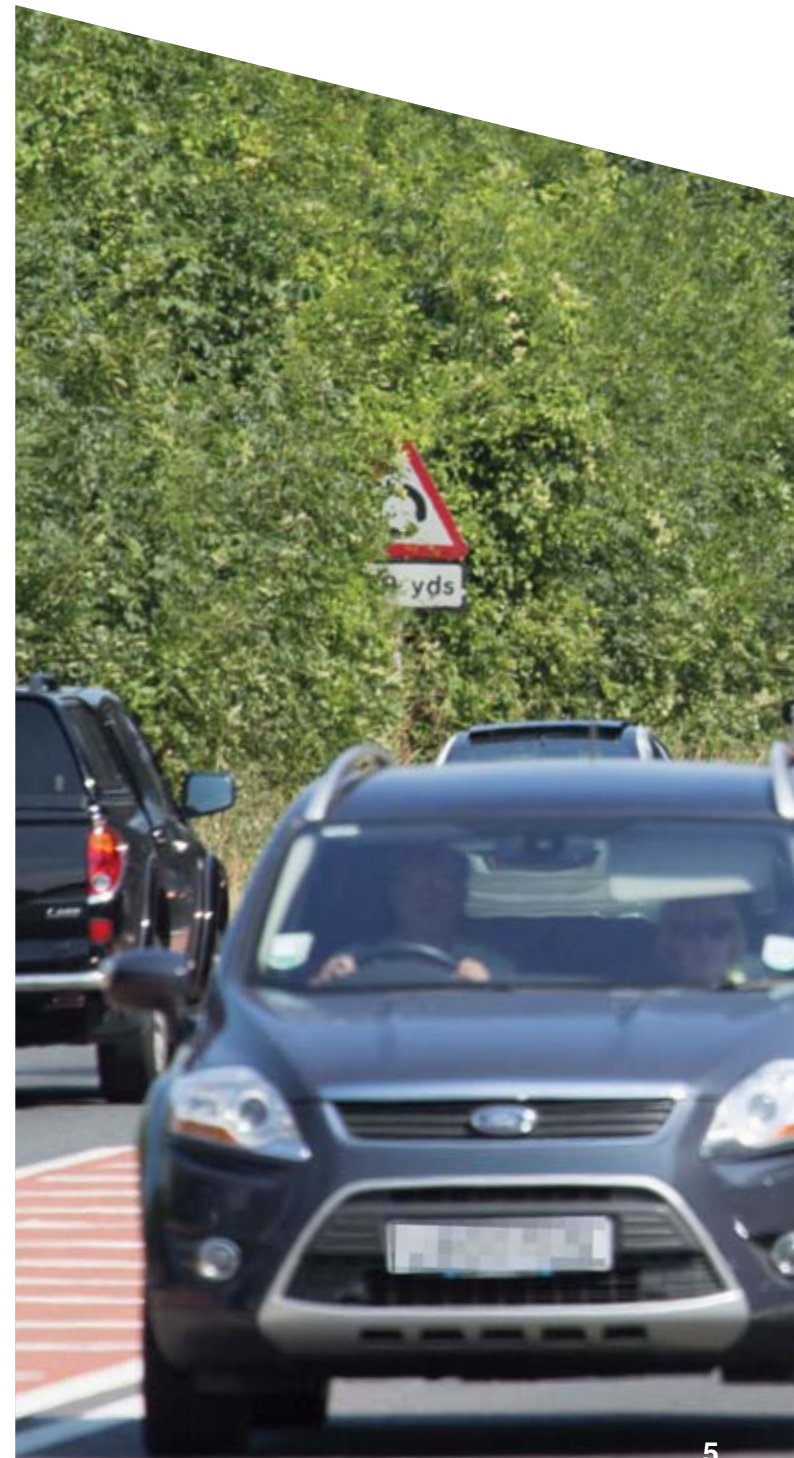
Following the reintroduction of the scheme in December 2014, we considered a number of route options that had the potential to improve the A303 between Sparkford and Ilchester. These included historical and new route options, both to the north and south of the existing road and widening of the existing road. We assessed these route options in terms of improved traffic capacity, better journey reliability, road safety, economic growth opportunities, community access and environmental considerations. The assessment also took into account the affordability and practical constraints of the route options.

To inform the route options development process we met with key stakeholders, including local authorities and environmental bodies. We wanted to understand and discuss local priorities, local development plans and technical and environmental constraints that create road improvement challenges.

We undertook various surveys in the area to make sure that we understood important local constraints. We recorded how people walk, cycle and ride along public rights of way and bridleways to make sure that the needs of non-motorised users were assessed comprehensively. Environmental studies were carried out to search for evidence of protected wildlife. We want to avoid disturbing protected species' habitats and, where possible, take opportunities to improve local diversity.

Following the assessment process we have shortlisted two route options which comply with the Government's Road Investment Strategy commitments and are sensitive to the local community. Within the two options there are certain elements which are still to be determined and could be delivered through phased construction. We have included these elements in the consultation so that you can provide feedback which will inform future development and decisions.

Information on each of the route options is provided on the following pages.



Option 1

Option 1 overview

Option 1 is a dual carriageway that starts east of Podimore Roundabout and follows the alignment of the existing A303 to Downhead. At this point the dual carriageway moves north before reverting to follow the route of the existing A303 in the direction of Hazlegrove. The route would re-join the existing dual carriageway near Sparkford.

At present the junctions at Downhead Lane and Hazlegrove are not suitable for national speed limit roads and will need to be removed or upgraded as part of the scheme proposals. The proposal for these junctions has not been confirmed, the future arrangements will be considered based on the outcome of traffic and economic modelling, public consultation feedback and environmental impact assessments. Construction of this option could possibly be phased.

This option includes a new bridge under the dual carriageway at Traits Lane.



Option 2

Option 2 overview

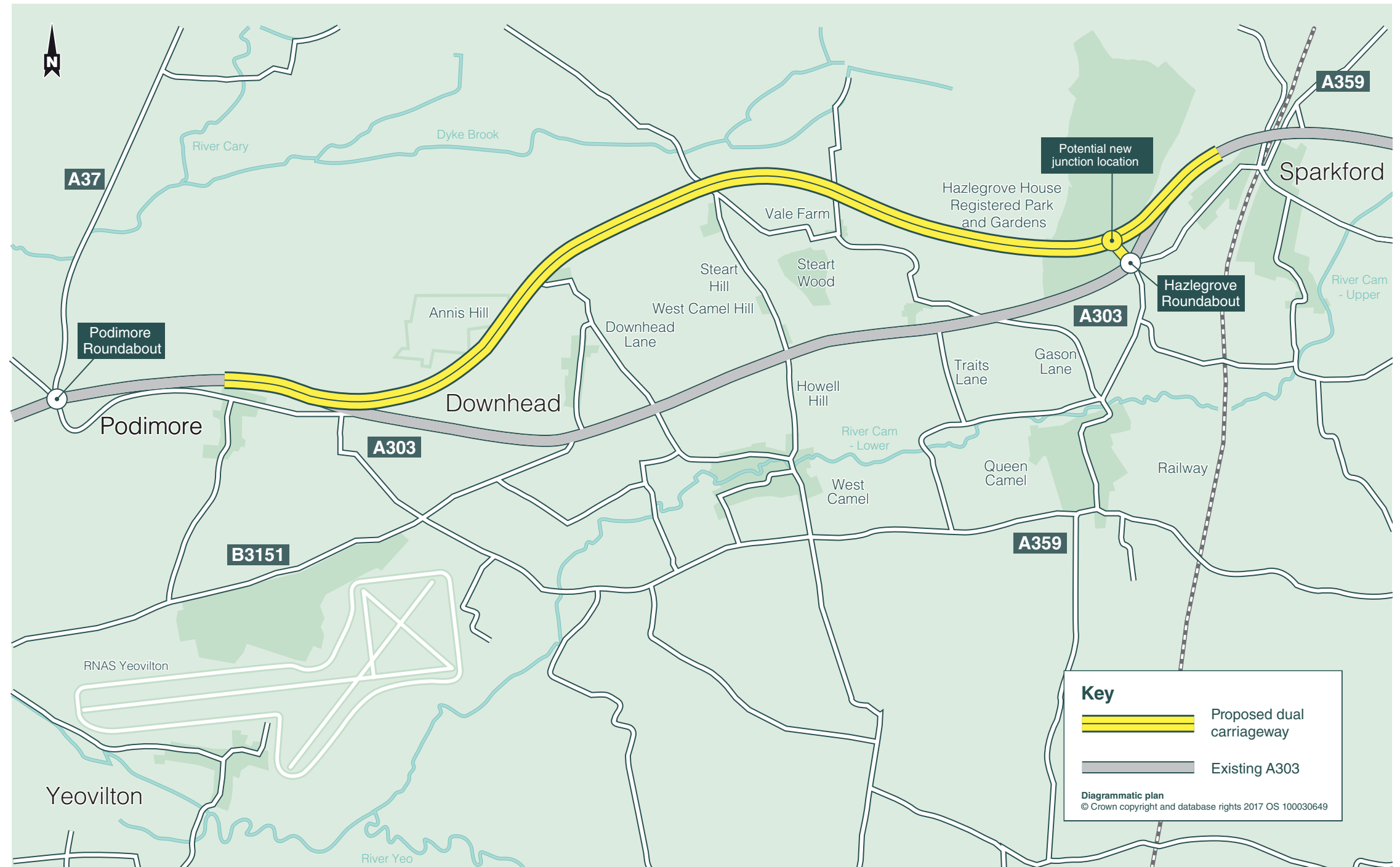
Option 2 is a dual carriageway that starts east of Podimore Roundabout before leaving the existing A303 to pass south east of Annis Hill. The new dual carriageway passes north of Steart Hill in the direction of Hazlegrove. The route would re-join the existing dual carriageway near Sparkford.

The route would re-join the existing dual carriageway near Sparkford.

It is likely that Hazlegrove Roundabout will be retained for access to local villages, however currently this junction slows traffic down because approaching vehicles must give way. The proposal for this junction has not been confirmed, the future arrangements will be considered based on the outcome of traffic and economic modelling, public consultation feedback and environmental impact assessments. Construction of this option could possibly be phased.

This option includes the construction of 3 new bridges over the dual carriageway, 1 at each of the following locations:

- Downhead Lane
- Steart Hill
- Vale Farm



Comparison	Option 1	Option 2
Route description	The route would follow the existing corridor of the A303 very closely, although in many locations it would be aligned just to the north or south of the existing carriageway.	The route would be located approximately up to 2/3 mile or 1 kilometre to the north of the existing carriageway between Podimore and Sparkford.
Construction considerations	There would be a need to manage traffic disruption during construction as the majority of the improvement will be made to the existing road.	Traffic disruption would be minimised during construction as it would be built away from the existing road.
Potential benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Modern safe road design. ■ This would be the shortest route. ■ Re-use of much of the existing road corridor to minimise local environmental impacts. ■ Segregated crossing points for cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Modern safe road design. ■ Potential for one additional large junction. ■ The existing A303 would be retained and provide local traffic access. ■ Segregated crossing points for cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians.
Potential impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Potential for two additional large junctions. ■ The route would require significant side road modifications to retain good access for local traffic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The route would pass through relatively undeveloped countryside. ■ The route could require construction of a deep cutting through the eastern edge of the Annis Hill Local Wildlife Site.

Caring for the environment

Understanding the impact on the environment and community within the A303 corridor is very important to us. Our aim is to minimise any adverse effects, while capturing the wider opportunities for improvement created by this scheme.

The area surrounding the A303 between Sparkford and Ilchester has a number of sensitive and valued environmental sites, as well as a number of dwellings and farm businesses. We have identified environmental constraints and used this information to help us develop the scheme proposals. A map showing the constraints is available on our website:

www.highways.gov.uk/Sparkford-to-Ilchester

Work is underway to collect further environmental information which will help us to select a preferred route and plan how we can mitigate adverse impacts on the environment. This could include planting, habitat creation and species protection.

Share your views

This is the first stage in our consultation process. We would like to know what you think about the route option proposals. We will listen to your views and publish a consultation report to inform the selection of a preferred route.

To help us with this, please complete the questionnaire, which you can access online at our website:

www.highways.gov.uk/Sparkford-to-Ilchester

Paper copies of the questionnaire will be available at the public events, at public information points and can be requested from the project team by:

emailing us at

A303SparkfordtolchesterDualling@highwaysengland.co.uk

writing to us at

A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Project Team, Highways England, 2/07k Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol, BS1 6HA

calling us on

0300 123 5000 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

Next steps?

Selecting a preferred route

This consultation is your opportunity to express your views on the current scheme proposals ahead of further development and selection of a preferred route.

After the consultation ends, we will publish a report summarising the responses. From this the project team will make recommendations for further development of the scheme. Subject to the findings of the consultation, a preferred route announcement is likely to be announced in autumn 2017.

The Development Consent Order application process

This scheme is classed as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under the Planning Act 2008. As such, we are required to make an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) to gain authorisation to construct the scheme. Following the submission of the application, the Planning Inspectorate will hold a public examination before making a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport who will decide on whether the project should go ahead. We intend to submit our application in summer 2018. Prior to the application, we will undertake further public consultation on our detailed design proposals.

More information about the DCO process can be found on the Planning Inspectorate's website: <http://infrastructure.planningportal.gov.uk>

Explaining the Development Consent Order (DCO) process



If you need help accessing this or any other Highways England information, please call **0300 123 5000** and we will help you.

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